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Celebrating the Birthday of the Prophet (ﷺ)

صالح الفوزان

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The commands mentioned in the Qur`aan and Sunnah to follow the laws of Allaah and His Messenger and the prohibitions of introducing innovations into the religion are quite clear. Allaah says that which translates as:

> **"Say, [O Muhammad], 'If you should love Allaah, then follow me, [So] Allaah will love you and forgive you your sins.' "**
>
> (Aal 'Imraan: 31)

> **"Follow, [O Mankind], what has been revealed to you from your Lord and do not follow other than Him any allies. Little do you remember."**
>
> (Al-A'raaf: 3)

> **"And [Moreover], this is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way."**
>
> (Al-An'aam: 153)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> "The most truthful of speech is the Book of Allaah and the best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad, and the most evil of things are those which are newly-invented."

And he (ﷺ) said:

> "Whoever innovates anything in this matter of ours (i.e., Islaam), that is not part of it will have it rejected." (Bukhaari & Muslim)

According to a version narrated by Muslim,

"Whoever does anything that is not in accordance with this matter of ours (i.e., Islaam), will have it rejected."

Among the reprehensible innovations that people have invented is the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet (ﷺ) (Al-Mawlid) in the month of Rabee' Al-Awwal. They celebrate this occasion in various ways:

· Some of them simply make it an occasion to gather and read the story of Al-Mawlid, then they present speeches and Qaseedahs (odes) for this occasion.

· Some of them make food and sweets etc., and offer them to the people present.

· Some of them hold these celebrations in the mosques, and some of them hold them in their houses.

· Some people do not limit themselves to the actions mentioned above; they include in these gatherings Haraam and reprehensible things, such as free mixing between men and women, dancing and singing, or committing actions of Shirk such as seeking the help of the Prophet (ﷺ), calling upon him, seeking his support against their enemies and so on.

Whatever form it takes and whatever the intentions of those who do this are, there is no doubt whatsoever that it is an invented, Haraam innovation which was introduced by the Shee'ah Faatimids after the three best centuries of Islaam, in order to corrupt the religion of the Muslims. The next person to do this after them and re-introduce it was King Al-Mudhaffar Abu Sa'eed Kawkaboori, the king of Irbil, at the end of the sixth century or the beginning of the seventh century AH, as was mentioned by the historians such as Ibn Khalkaan, may Allaah have mercy upon him, and others.

Abu Shaamah, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said:

> “The first person to do that in Mosul was Shaykh ‘Umar Ibn Muhammad Al-Malaa, one of the well-known righteous people. Then the ruler of Irbil and others followed his example.”

Ibn Katheer, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said in his biography of Abu Sa’eed Kazkaboori:

> “He used to observe the Mawlid in Rabee’ Al-Awwal and hold a huge celebration on that occasion... some of those who were present at the feast of Al-Muzaffar on some occasions of the Mawlid said that he used to offer in the feast five thousand grilled heads of sheep, ten thousand chickens and one hundred thousand large dishes, and thirty trays of sweets... he would let the Sufis sing from Dhuhr until Fajr, and he himself would dance with them.”

Ibn Khalkaan, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said:

> “When it is the first of Safar they decorate those domes with various kinds of fancy adornments, and in every dome there sits a group of singers and a group of puppeteers and players of musical instruments, and they do not leave any one of those domes without setting up a group (of performers) there. The people give up work during this period, and they do no work except for going around and watching the entertainment. When there are two days to go until the Mawlid, they bring out a large number of camels, cows and sheep, more than can be described, and they accompany them with all the drums, songs and musical instruments that they have, until they bring them to the square... On the night of the Mawlid there are performances of nasheed after Maghrib in the citadel.”

So, this is the origin of this celebration on the occasion of the Prophet’s birthday. More recently idle entertainment, extravagance, and wasting of money and time have become associated with an innovation for which Allaah has not sent down any authority.

It is incumbent upon all Muslims to revive the Sunnah and put an end to Bid'ah (innovation); they should not perform any action until they know the ruling of Allaah concerning it.

Celebrating the occasion of the birthday of the Prophet (ﷺ) is forbidden and is to be rejected for a number of reasons:

1 – It is not part of the Sunnah of the Messenger (ﷺ) or of the khaleefahs who succeeded him. Since this is the case, then it is a forbidden innovation, because the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> "I urge you to follow my Sunnah and the way of the rightly-guided khaleefahs after me; adhere to it and cling to it firmly. Beware of newly-invented things, for every newly-invented thing is an innovation (Bid'ah) and every innovation is a going-astray." (Ahmad & Tirmidhi)

Celebrating the Mawlid is an innovation introduced by the Shee'ah Faatimids after the three best centuries of Islaam in order to corrupt the religion of the Muslims. If a person does anything in order to draw closer to Allaah which was not done by the Messenger (ﷺ) or enjoined by him, and was not done by the khaleefahs who succeeded him, this action implies that he is accusing the Messenger (ﷺ) of not fully explaining the religion to the people, and that he disbelieves in the words of Allaah what translates as:

"This day I have perfected for you your religion."

(Al-Maa'idah: 3)

...because he is adding something extra and claiming that it is a part of the religion, which the Messenger (ﷺ) did not bring.

2 – Celebrating the birthday of the Prophet (ﷺ) is an imitation of the Christians, because they celebrate the birth of the Messiah (عليه السلام). Imitating them is extremely Haraam. The Hadeeth tells us that it is

forbidden to imitate the Kuffaar, and we are commanded to differ from them. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> "Whoever imitates a people is one of them" (Ahmad & Abu Daawood).

And he said,

> "Be different from the mushrikeen (polytheists)" (Muslim)

...especially with regard to things that are the symbols or rituals of their religion.

3 – Besides being Bid'ah and an imitation of the Christians, both of which are Haraam, celebrating the birthday of the Prophet (ﷺ) is also a means that leads to exaggeration and excess in venerating him, which even goes as far as calling upon him (making Du'aa to him) and seeking his help, instead of calling upon Allaah, as happens now among many of those who observe the Bid'ah of the Mawlid, when they call upon the Messenger (ﷺ) instead of Allaah, and ask him for support, and sing Qaseedahs (odes) of shirk praising him, like Qaseedat Al-Burdah etc. The Prophet (ﷺ) forbade going to extremes in praising him, as he said:

> "Do not extol me as the Christians extolled the son of Maryam. For I am just His slave, so call me the slave of Allaah and His Messenger" (Bukhaari)

... i.e., do not exaggerate in praising me as the Christians exaggerated in praising the Messiah and venerated him until they worshipped him instead of Allaah. Allaah forbade them to do that when he said that which translates as:

“O people of the Scripture (Christians)! Do not commit excess in your religion or say about Allaah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a Messenger of Allaah and His word which He directed to Mary and a soul [created at command] from Him.”

(An-Nisaa’: 171).

Our Prophet (ﷺ) forbade us to exaggerate concerning him lest the same thing happen to us as happened to them, so he said:

“Beware of exaggeration, for those who came before you were destroyed because of exaggeration.” (An-Nasaa`i)

4 – Observing the innovation of the Prophet’s birthday opens the door to other kinds of Bid‘ah and being distracted by them from the Sunnah. Hence you find that the innovators are very active when it comes to Bid‘ah and very lazy when it comes to the Sunnah; they hate it and regard those who follow it as enemies, until their entire religion is innovated anniversaries and Mawlids. They have split into various groups, each of which commemorates the anniversary of its Imaam’s birth, such as the births of Al-Badawi, Ibn ‘Arabi, Al-Dasooqi and Al-Shaadhili. No sooner do they end the celebration of one birthday but they start the celebration of another. This results in exaggeration concerning these dead people and others, and in calling upon them instead of Allaah, believing that they can bring benefit and cause harm, until they deviate from the religion of Allaah and go back to the religion of the people of the Jaahiliyyah about whom Allaah says that which translates as:

“And they worship other than Allaah that which neither harms them nor benefits them, and they say: ‘These are our intercessors with Allaah.’ ”

(Yoonus: 18).

"And those who protectors besides Him [say]: 'We worship them that they may bring us nearer to Allaah in position.' "

(Az-Zumar: 3).

Those who think that this Bid'ah should be continued produce specious arguments which are flimsier than a spider's web. These specious arguments may be dealt with as follows:

1 – Their claim that this is veneration of the Prophet (ﷺ):

The response to that is that the way to venerate him is to obey him, do as he commanded and avoid that which he forbade, and to love him; he is not to be venerated through innovations, myths and sins. Celebrating his birthday is of this blameworthy type because it is a sin. The people who venerated the Prophet (ﷺ) the most were the Sahaabah, may Allaah be pleased with them, as 'Urwah Ibn Mas'ood, (رضي الله عنه) , said to Quraysh:

"O people, I swear by Allaah that I have visited kings. I went to Caesar, Chasroes and the Negus, but I swear by Allaah that I never saw a king whose companions venerated him as much as the companions of Muhammad venerated Muhammad. By Allaah, whenever he spat it never fell to the ground, it fell into the hand of one his companions, then they would wipe their faces and skins with it. If he instructed them to do something, they would hasten to do as he commanded. When he did wudoo´, they would almost fight over his water. When he spoke they would lower their voices in his presence; and they did not stare at him out of respect for him." (Bukhaari)

Yet despite this level of veneration, they never took the day of his birth as an ‘Eid (festival). If that had been prescribed in Islaam they would not have neglected to do that.

2 – Using as evidence the fact that many people in many countries do this.

The response to that is that evidence can only consist of that which is proven from the Prophet (ﷺ), and what is proven from the Prophet is that innovations are forbidden in general, and this is an innovation. What people do, if it goes against the evidence (Daleel), does not prove anything, even if many of them do it. Allaah says that which translates as:

> **“And if you obey most of those upon the earth, they will mislead you from the way of Allaah.”**
>
> (Al-An‘aam: 116)

Nevertheless, in every age, and all praise is due to Allaah, there have always been those who denounce this Bid‘ah and state clearly that it is false. Those who persist in following it after the truth has been explained to them have no proofs to fall back on.

Among those who denounced the celebration of this occasion was Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, in Iqtidaa’ Al-Siraat Al-Mustaqeem; Imaam Al-Shaatibi in Al-I’tisaam; Ibn Al-Haaj in Al-Madkhil; Shaykh Taaj Al-Deen ‘Ali Ibn ‘Umar Al-Lakhami who wrote an entire book denouncing it; Shaykh Muhammad Basheer Al-Sahsawaani Al-Hindi in his book Siyaanah Al-Insaan; Al-Sayyid Muhammad Rasheed Ridaa wrote an essay on this topic; Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Ibraaheem Aali Ash-Shaykh wrote a separate essay on it; Shaykh ‘Abd al-’Azeez Ibn Baaz; and others who are still writing and denouncing this Bid‘ah every year in the pages of newspapers and magazines, at a time when this Bid‘ah is widespread.

3 – They say that by celebrating the Mawlid they are keeping the memory of the Prophet (ﷺ) alive.

The answer to this is that the memory of the Prophet (ﷺ) is constantly kept alive by the Muslim, such as when his name (ﷺ) is mentioned in the Adhaan and Iqaamah and in Khutbahs, and every time the Muslim recites the Shahaadatayn after doing Wudoo´ and in the prayers, and every time he sends blessings upon the Prophet (ﷺ) in his prayers and when he is mentioned, and every time the Muslim does a Waajib (obligatory) or Mustahabb (recommended) action that was prescribed by the Messenger (ﷺ). In all of these ways (the Muslim) remembers him and the reward equivalent to the reward of the one who does that action goes back to the Prophet (ﷺ). Thus the Muslim constantly keeps the memory of the Messenger alive and has a connection with him night and day throughout his life through that which Allaah has prescribed, not only on the day of the Mawlid and things which are Bid‘ah and go against the Sunnah, for that puts one at a distance from the Messenger (ﷺ) and the Messenger will disown him because of that.

The Messenger (ﷺ) has no need of this innovated celebration, because Allaah has already bestowed veneration and respect upon him, as He says that which translates as:

“And raised high for you your repute.”

(Ash-Sharh: 4)

This is because the name of Allaah is not mentioned in the Adhaan, Iqaamah or Khutbahs, except that the Messenger (ﷺ) is mentioned after Him; this is sufficient veneration, love and renewal of his memory, and sufficient encouragement to follow him.

Allaah did not refer to the birth of the Messenger (ﷺ) in the Qur`aan, rather He referred to his Mission, and says what translates as:

"Indeed, Allaah conferred a great favour on the believers when He sent among them a Messenger (Muhammad) from among themselves."

(Aal 'Imraan: 164)

"It is He who sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves."

(Al-Jumu'ah: 2).

4 – They may say that the celebration of the Prophet's birthday was introduced by a knowledgeable and just king who intended thereby to draw closer to Allaah.

Our response to that is that Bid'ah is not acceptable, no matter who does it. A good intention does not justify a bad deed and even if a person died as a knowledgeable and righteous person, this does not mean that he was infallible.

5 – They say that celebrating the Mawlid comes under the heading of Bid'ah Hasanah (good innovation) because it is based on giving thanks to Allaah for the Prophet (ﷺ)!

Our response to that is that there is nothing good in innovation. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Whoever innovates anything in this matter of ours (i.e., Islaam), that is not part of it will have it rejected." (Bukhaari)

And he (ﷺ) said:

"Every innovation is a going astray." (Ahmad & Tirmidhi)

The ruling on innovations is that they are all misguidance, but this specious argument suggests that not every Bid'ah is a going astray, rather there are good innovations.

Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said:

"The words of the Prophet (ﷺ), 'every innovation is a going astray' is a concise but comprehensive comment which includes everything; it is one of the most important principles of religion. It is like his words:

'Whoever innovates anything in this matter of ours (i.e., Islaam) that is not part of it will have it rejected.' (Bukhaari)

Whoever innovates anything and attributes it to Islaam when it has no basis in the religion, this is a going astray and is nothing to do with Islaam, whether that has to do with matters of belief ('Aqeedah) or outward and inward words and deeds."

These people have no proof that there is any such thing as a "good innovation" apart from the words of 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) concerning Taraaweeh prayers when he said:

'What a good innovation this is.' (Bukhaari)

They also said that things were innovated which were not denounced by the Salaf, such as compiling the Qur`aan into one volume and writing and compiling the collections of Ahadeeth.

The response to that is that these matters had a basis in Islam, so they were not newly-invented.

'Umar (رضي الله عنه) said: 'What a good Bid'ah,' meaning innovation in the linguistic sense, not in the Shar'i sense. Whatever has a basis in Islam, if it is described as an innovation, is an innovation in the linguistic sense, not in the Shar'i sense, because innovation in the Shar'i sense means that which has no basis in Islam.

Compiling the Qur`aan into one book has a basis in Islam, because the Prophet (ﷺ) had commanded that the Qur`aan be written down,

but it was scattered, so the Sahaabah compiled it in one volume so as so protect and preserve it.

The Prophet (ﷺ) led his companions in praying Taraaweeh for a while, then he stopped doing that, lest it become obligatory on them. The Sahaabah, may Allaah be pleased with them, continued to pray it individually during the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) and after his death, until ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab (رضي الله عنه) gathered them behind one Imaam as they used to pray behind the Prophet (ﷺ). Therefore, this was not an innovation introduced into the religion.

Compiling the collections of Ahadeeth also has a basis in Islaam. The Prophet (ﷺ) ordered that some Ahaadeeth be written down for some of his companions when they asked him for that. Generally, doing this during his lifetime was prohibited, for fear that the Qur`aan might be mixed with things that were not part of it (from the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ). When the Prophet (ﷺ) died, this fear was no longer a factor, because the Qur`aan had been completed and arranged in order before he died. The Muslims compiled the Sunnah after that in order to preserve it and keep it from being lost. May Allaah reward them with good on behalf of Islaam and the Muslims, because they preserved the Book of their Lord and the Sunnah of their Prophet (ﷺ) from being lost or being tampered with.

We may also say to them: why was this act of thanksgiving, as they call it, not done by the best generations, the Sahaabah, Taabi‘een and followers of the Taabi‘een, who loved the Prophet (ﷺ) the most and who were most keen to do good and give thanks? Are those who introduced the innovation of the Mawlid more rightly-guided than them? Do they give more thanks to Allaah? Definitely not!

6 – They may say that celebrating the birthday of the Prophet (ﷺ) is indicative of their love for him; this is one way of showing that, and showing love of the Prophet (ﷺ) is prescribed in Islam!

The answer to that is that undoubtedly loving the Prophet (ﷺ) is obligatory for every Muslim; he should love him more than he loves himself, his child, his father and all of mankind – may my father and mother be sacrificed for him – but that does not mean that we should introduce innovations for doing so that have not been prescribed for us. Loving him dictates that we should obey him and follow him, for that is one of the greatest manifestations of love, as it is said: "If your love is sincere then obey him; for the lover obeys the one whom he loves."

Loving the Prophet (ﷺ) implies keeping his Sunnah alive, adhering firmly to it, and avoiding words and deeds that go against it. Undoubtedly everything that goes against his Sunnah is a reprehensible innovation (Bid'ah) and a manifest act of disobedience. That includes celebrating his birthday and other kinds of Bid'ah. Having good intentions does not mean that it is permissible to introduce innovations into the religion. Islaam is based on two things, purity of intention and following the Prophet (ﷺ).

Allaah says that which translates as:

> **"Yes [on the contrary], whoever submits his face [i.e., self] in Islaam to Allaah while being a doer of good will have his reward with his Lord. And no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve."**
>
> (Al-Baqarah: 112)

Submitting one's face to Allaah means being sincere towards Allaah, and doing good means following the Messenger (ﷺ) and implementing his Sunnah.

7 – Another of their specious arguments is when they say that by celebrating the Mawlid and reading the biography of the Prophet (ﷺ) on this occasion, they are encouraging people to follow his example!

We say to them that reading the biography of the Prophet (ﷺ) and following his example are required of the Muslim all the time, all year long and throughout his life. Singling out a specific day for that with no evidence for doing so is an innovation, and

> "...every innovation is a going astray." (Ahmad & Tirmidhi)

Bid'ah does not bear any fruit but evil and it leads to a person distancing himself from the Prophet (ﷺ).

In conclusion, celebrating the birthday of the Prophet (ﷺ), whatever form it takes, is a reprehensible innovation. The Muslims should put a stop to this and other kinds of Bid'ah, and occupy themselves with reviving and adhering to the Sunnah. They should not be deceived by those who promote and defend this Bid'ah, for these types of people are more interested in keeping innovations alive than in reviving the Sunnah; they may not even care about the Sunnah at all. Whoever is like this, it is not permissible to imitate him or follow his example, even if the majority of people are like this. Rather we should follow the example of those who follow the path of the Sunnah, among the righteous Salaf and their followers, even if they are few. Truth is not measured by the men who speak it; rather men are measured by the truth.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> "Whoever among you lives (for a long time) will see many differences. I urge you to follow my Sunnah and the way of the rightly-guided khaleefahs who come after me. Hold on to it firmly. Beware of newly-invented matters, for every innovation is a going astray." (Ahmad & Tirmidhi)

So the Prophet (ﷺ) explained to us in this Hadeeth what we should do when there are differences of opinion, just as he explained that

everything that goes against his Sunnah, be it words or deeds, is a Bid‘ah, and every Bid‘ah is a going astray.

If we see that there is no basis for celebrating the birthday of the Prophet (ﷺ), whether in the Sunnah or in the way of the rightly-guided khaleefahs, then it is one of the newly-invented matters, one of the Bid‘ahs which lead people astray. This principle is what is implied by this Hadeeth and is what is indicated by the Aayah which translates as:

> **“O you who have believed, Obey Allaah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allaah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allaah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result.”**
>
> (An-Nisaa´: 59)

Referring to Allaah means referring to His Book, and referring to the Messenger (ﷺ) means referring to his Sunnah after he has passed away. The Qur`aan and Sunnah are the reference point in cases of dispute. Where in the Qur`aan or Sunnah does it indicate that it is prescribed in Islam to celebrate the Prophet’s birthday? Whoever does that or thinks that it is good must repent to Allaah from this and from other kinds of Bid‘ah. This is the attitude of the Muslim who is seeking the truth. But whoever is too stubborn and arrogant after proof has been established, then his reckoning will be with his Lord.